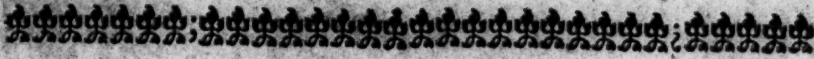
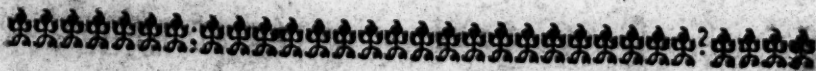


Printed IV



A
LETTER
To the AUTHOR of the
GROUNDS and REASONS
OF
CHRISTIANITY.



Christian Religion

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A

LETTER

To the Author of the

REASONS



OF

CHRISTIANITY.

A
L E T T E R
To the AUTHOR of the
G R O U N D S and R E A S O N S
O F
C H R I S T I A N I T Y.

By a Divine of the CHURCH of
E N G L A N D.

Unless men are allowed to endeavour to convince others of the truth of their opinions, all teaching must be laid aside, and men will be hindered from doing the greatest act of humanity and charity for one another; for no man can teach others, but by endeavouring to convince them; nor ought any one to teach another any thing, but that whereof he himself is perswaded; nor can any man have any other rule of teaching truth, but his own sentiments. Pref. to the Grounds, &c. p. viii.

L O N D O N:
Printed for J. Roberts at the Oxford Arms in
in Warwick-Lane, 1724.

LETTER

To the Author of the

Grounds and Reasons

OF

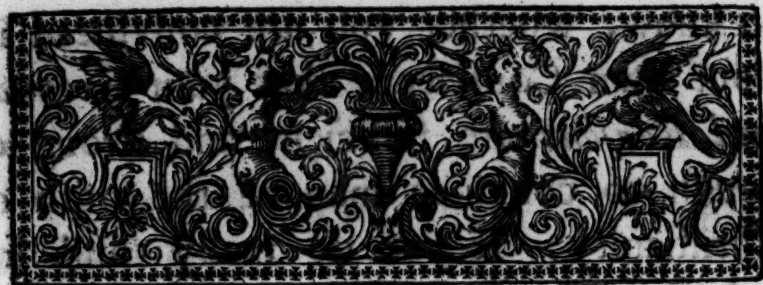
CHRISTIANITY.

By a Divine of the



Printed by J. Johnson, in Pall-mall, near St. James's Church, in the Strand, London.

LONDON:
Printed by J. Johnson, in Pall-mall, near St. James's Church, in the Strand, London.



A
L E T T E R

To the AUTHOR of
The GROUNDS *and* REASONS
of Christianity.



Y Design in these Papers is,
to make some Reflections
upon those parts of your
Book, where Mr. *Whiston* is
not concerned.

In order whereto, I begin first with
your Title Page; *The Grounds and Rea-*
sons

fons of Christianity. And here I desire to know, whether you are convinced in your own Conscience that your *Grounds and Reasons* are sufficient and strong enough to convince men of the truth of Christianity: If you do really think so, I desire to know further, whether you are not satisfied in your own mind, that there are much better Arguments to prove the truth of Christianity than those produced in your Book: If you are convinced there are, (as I think a person of your extensive knowledge can't but be) then I conclude in, or very near, your own words; that as a Man, you have *a not consulted your own Reason; and as a Christian and Protestant, the Scriptures upon this Subject*; as by your own confession, you, and all others, who write upon this Subject ought to do; neither have you *used the best means of information* (which as you say) *consists in consulting Reason and Scripture, and calling in the aid of others.* But enough about the Title Page.

^a Pref, p. 13. l. 1. 5

^b P. 14. l. 5.

I.

The very first Proposition is so ambiguously expressed (and I wish it was not with a design to deceive the unwary readers) that after I have considered it over and over again, I can make nothing but a notorious falshood of it. *Christianity is founded upon Judaism*: If you mean by it the Christian Religion is *founded* on *Judaism* only, it is a very great falshood: If you mean by it that one argument for the truth of Christianity is *founded* upon the truth of the Jewish Religion, I perfectly agree with you: If neither of these be your meaning, I desire a further explication, that I may be able thereby to make some further reply. I don't in the least question but you *know* that there are other arguments besides those drawn from the Jewish Religion to prove the truth of the Christian; and therefore I take the liberty to tell you again, that you have not *used the best means of information*; neither have you

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consulted

consulted your own Reason and the Scriptures, as you ought to have done, before you publish'd to the World your own thoughts upon this subject.

But to proceed: Altho' *Jesus is the Person said in the New Testament to be promis'd in the Old, under the character of the Messias of the Jews*; yet he does not *claim the obedience of the world as such only*; for he was *Messias of the Gentiles also, and claims obedience from them, as such*. Your next words are; *It is the design of the Authors of the New, to prove ALL THE PARTS of Christianity from the Old Testament. All the parts are ambiguous words*. If you please to explain, I shall be able, I believe, to make some reply.

II.

In the former Section, it was *all the parts*; now 'tis St. *Matthew* proves *several parts*: Here you are more explicit; I wish you had been so before. Our
Blessed

Blessed Saviour and his Apostles make use of the Predictions of the Old Testament, as one argument to prove the truth of Christianity ; but then they make use of several other arguments to prove the same, as plainly and undeniably appears from the New Testament.

It does not plainly appear that St. *Paul's* argument, which you, in a sly manner, call a *Divine argument*, to prove the truth of Christianity, is made use of by him to that purpose ; and I believe upon a second reading of that whole chapter, from whence your quotation is taken, you will find, that you have not rightly apprehended his scope and design in it. You tell us, p. 12. that the *grand and fundamental Article of Christianity was, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messias of the Jews predicted in the Old Testament*. When you think fit to explain those *pompous words, The grand and fundamental Article*, for they very much want it, I shall think fit to make a reply. Christianity being designed for Gentiles, as well

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as

as Jews, there must be some *grand and fundamental Article* for them also ; unless you can make it appear, that the Gentiles ought to turn Jews before they become Christian Converts.

III.

The next Section is about the *sole true Canon of Scripture*: By a *Canon* you mean nothing else but a *Rule*. The *Old Testament* was such a *Rule* to the Jews in the times of the Apostles. Now although our blessed Saviour and his Apostles have declared no Books of the New Testament to be canonical ; yet unless you can prove, that those who settled the *Canon* of the New Testament afterwards, were such men as you vilely suggest them to be, all you say is nothing to the purpose. I cannot look upon you as an impartial Judge of what is *proper for* Jesus and his Apostles to have done in this matter : It is fact, that neither of them have left us a *Canon* of the New Testament, and that *they* thought proper (whatever your
3 thoughts

thoughts are about it) to leave it to some after them to do it. Your *hints* are very *short* concerning the *true Canon of Scripture*, and very powerful *Considerations* (in your own opinion I mean) to put an end to *all the Controversies of Christians about the Canon of Scripture*. But I hope upon a second reflection you will think they ought to have been much *longer*, to settle a matter of so great importance to the Christian World; and that if you think fit to write again, you will beg pardon for your false reflection upon *many great Divines*, for presuming to correct, by critical *Emendations*, several *capital places* in the *sacred Writers*.

IV.

This whole Section discovers so much Ignorance about, and so much Malice against, all revealed Religion, that I desire you to read it over again, and to let the World know, whether you are still convinced of the truth of every thing in it.

The truth of Christianity depends in some measure, but not as you say, (*only, and as it ought*) on ancient Revelations made to the Jews in the Old Testament; for we have other Arguments, as good and conclusive, made use of by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, to convince Jews and Gentiles of the truth thereof.

V.

The answer to the fourth Section is a full answer to this: I shall only add, that I wish the *Title* had been concerning the Proofs of Christianity in general; for then I should have had some hopes from such a *Title*, that you would therein have made use of the *best means of Information* to establish the truth of Christianity.

VI.

Whether these Proofs are valid, or not, Christianity may be strongly and invincibly established on other solid and true Foundations;

dations; because our blessed Saviour and his Apostles have made use of such for its establishment in the World. *St. Peter's argument drawn from prophecy, which proceeds from the Holy Ghost, may be a stronger argument than a Miracle.* But our blessed Saviour, who foretold his own Resurrection, and did rise again by a miraculous Power, is a stronger argument than *St. Peter's*.

I pass over the remaining part as little to the purpose.

VII.

Whether the Proofs from the Old Testament be valid, or not, Christianity has still a just Foundation: For our blessed Saviour and his Apostles do not make the truth of Christianity to depend on this Foundation only.

As to what you say about Miracles, I answer, that our Saviour himself often appeals to his Miracles, as an argument of
his

his divine Mission; and there is one in the New Testament, which is both a *Prophecy* and a *Miracle*; and that alone, without any collateral proof, is the strongest and most conclusive proof for the truth of the Christian Religion; but if it be not *such* without collateral proofs, with the addition of those, it will appear, I hope, when thoroughly considered and justly stated, an unanswerable proof for the divine Mission of our blessed Saviour.

VIII.

In this Section you endeavour to make it appear, that the *Proofs* you have brought for, or against, the truth of the Christian Religion, are *Typical* or *Allegorical Proofs*. Now I desire you to consider what you mean by an *Allegorical Proof*, and try by a little reflection, whether you have observed the rules laid down by the acute Mr. *Lock*, about the combination and connection of Ideas. A *Proof* is an argument to evince the truth of a proposition.

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An *Allegory* is a continuation of a Similitude, for the illustration or explication of any truth we are endeavouring to find out. It is evident that these two Ideas can't be joyned together, but are utterly inconsistent ; and you might as well have said that these Proofs are nonsensical *Proofs*, as that they are *Allegorical Proofs* ; it being a flat contradiction in terms, to call a *Proof* an *Allegorical Proof*. And had you not forgot Mr. *Lock's* rules about the combination of Ideas, you would never have suffer'd so much nonsense, about *Allegorical Proofs*, to drop from your pen. You'd never have said a word about the strength or weakness of such sort of Proofs. But to quit this abuse of words in you,

Supposing these Proofs, which you call *Typical* and *Secondary*, as well as *Allegorical*, are *not Proofs according to scholastic Rules* ; yet they may be strong and conclusive Proofs, according to the *rules of Grammar and Logick* ; and as such you ought to have considered them ; and then
you'd

you'd have behaved your self like a man that was making an impartial enquiry after truth. I might go on to consider the remaining part of this Chapter, but the reason why I do not at present, you'll find at the end of this Letter.

IX.

I agree with you in *supposing*, that an *Author* has but one meaning at a time to a proposition (which is to be found out by a critical examination of his words) and so in citing that proposition from him, and in arguing from it in that one meaning, is to proceed by the common rules of Grammar and Logick. By which rules, I shall now examine the title of this Chapter.

The Nature of Typical or Allegorical Proofs and Reasoning.

A *Proof* is an argument to evince the truth of a Proposition. An *Allegory*, as I observed before, is a Similitude considered.

Now

Now a Similitude is never made use of, as a species, or sort of *proof*, or argument ; but as an illustration or explication of any subject we are speaking of, or writing upon ; and therefore *Allegorical proof* is Nonsense : inasmuch as it implies a contradiction in terms. The Ideas of *Allegory* and *Proof*, are inconsistent Ideas ; and your joyning two such incoherent terms together, shews you to have ^{no} clear and distinct understanding of the nature and connection of Ideas ; tho' you may *imagine* that you have given the World a full and distinct explication of *Allegorical Proofs and Reasoning*.

But after all ; it must be confess'd, that our blessed Saviour and his Apostles have made use of, and appealed to the predictions of the Old Testament as a proof for his divine Mission ; and therefore those predictions with their completion in the New, must be look'd upon as strong and conclusive proofs for the truth of Christianity. It seems to me plain and evident, from reading over all the *predictions* in
C the

the Old Testament and their completions in the New, that some of them relate to the person of the Messiah *only*, and that others which are predicted of our blessed Saviour, seem to be fulfilled some way in him; tho' at the same time, the Prophets might have some other person in view; and those *predictions* might be fulfilled in that person, soon after the publication of those *prophecies* to the world. However, if you desire it, I promise to reconsider this matter, with no other design but to find out the truth.

I hope by this time you are convinced that the *Cause of Christianity* is not given up to the *Jews, and other Enemies*, by our appealing to the Predictions of the Old Testament, and their completions in the New, and making use of them as a strong and conclusive proof for the truth of the Christian Religion; and that no other *enemies* can make it plain and evident, that *the Old and New Testament have no manner of connection in that respect.*

I might

I might go on and consider the 11th Chapter. But this would not in the least promote the chief end, and principal design, I have in this Letter to you, Sir, in your Preface you have declared to the World in a very solemn manner, *pag. 23. That free debate tends to shorten and lessen the number of Controversies; that if free debate were permitted, many points, notwithstanding the present warm contests, and learned Books written PRO and CON about them are so plain, that they would not then bear a long debate; many others would be dropp'd when it was seen, that they were too obscure for the learned to master; and all points of speculations whatsoever would be dropp'd among the vulgar.* For these good Reasons, if you will promise, that if there be any further Correspondence between us, you'll behave your self more like ^c *a Man*, more like a person of moral Honesty and Integrity; but especially more like a Gentleman, ^d *a*

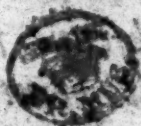
^c Pref. p. 4.

^d Ibid. p. 5.

Scholar.

Scholar, and a Philosopher, and keep close to the Argument, and leave out every thing that is foreign to it, I will draw up what seems to me a conclusive proof of the truth of the Christian Religion, and publish it as soon as conveniently may be.

If you look upon this Letter as too short an answer to that part of your Book, I have taken into consideration; upon the least intimation, I shall be willing to publish a much larger upon this very subject; before I send the second Letter into the World.



F I N I S.

